

# OLAFUR ELIASSON HEART



Olafur Eliasson is an artist who wants to make the world a better place. He creates works in a variety of materials and on different scales. His work asks the viewer to think carefully about how they interact with the world, as well as enjoy the artwork itself. Born in Denmark in 1967, Eliasson started drawing as a child and had his first art show when he was just 15 years old.

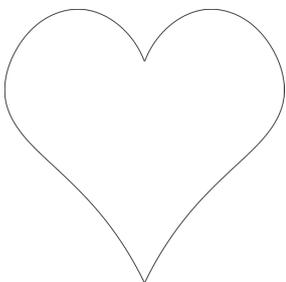
Many of Eliasson's artworks involve water. An early example is 'Beauty' which was produced while he was still at art school. A rainbow is created by shining a light onto a fine mist of water coming from a perforated pipe. People can interact with this installation.



Olafur Eliasson, Beauty, 1993



Much of his recent work has dealt with his concern around the issue of Climate Change. Responding to the melting ice caps, Eliasson created these pieces titled 'Glacial currents' by placing pieces of ancient glacial ice taken from the sea off the coast of Greenland on top of watercolour washes. As the cold ice melted it created a new image with currents captured in the paint as it dried.



**Your task is to create your own experimental watercolour painting in the shape of a heart to signify concern for the natural environment. Taking inspiration from Eliasson's work, you will create a unique and personal image.**

# Your Task

## You will need:

Thick paper (ideally watercolour paper)  
Pencil  
Watercolours, water and brush  
Paper towels

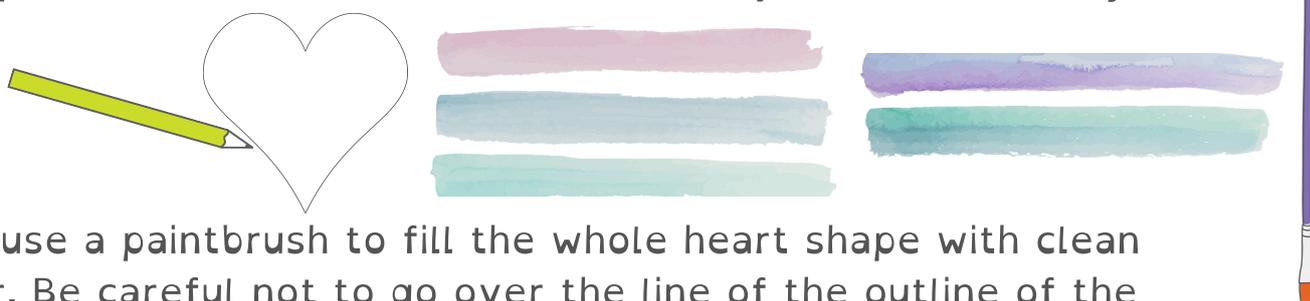
## Optional extras:

Salt  
Straws  
Ice  
White wax crayons

Start by creating a sample page. Use one blank sheet of paper to test out different watercolour techniques: washes, wet-in-wet and blotting. Explore other techniques such as salt, blowing through a straw, and melting ice, if you have them. Test out how different colours work together too.

Annotate your page by writing down how you created each sample and how effective you think it is.

Now take another sheet of paper, write your name on the back and draw a heart shape as large as possible on it. Use a light line (don't press hard) and don't worry if the shape is not perfectly symmetrical - each person in the class should have a unique heart that way.



Next use a paintbrush to fill the whole heart shape with clean water. Be careful not to go over the line of the outline of the heart. Use plenty of water so that the shape will stay wet while you are working on it.

Choose two colours to start with and start adding these to the heart shape using the wet-in-wet technique. Watch how the paint colour swirls, blends and joins. Adapt your work as you go. Add effects from your sample page where you think they will work well.

Stop when you think your work is finished and put it aside to dry.



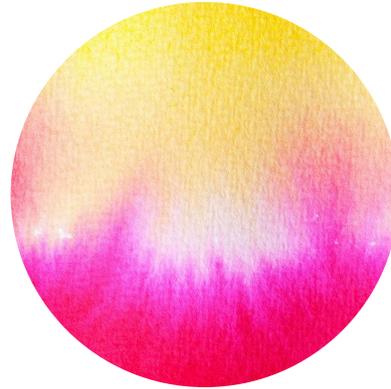
Looking at the completed watercolour closely, can you see resemblances to shapes, colours and textures from the **natural world**? Perhaps there is a coastline seen from high above, or a zoomed-in section of coral or moss growing? What do you see? What do the colours make you think of? **Try to come up with at least 5 things that connect with your watercolour and note them on your sample page.**

# WATERCOLUR TECHNIQUES



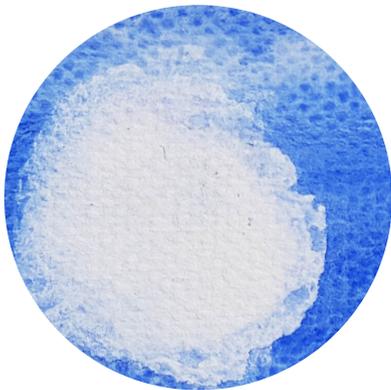
## Wash

With a very wet brush, use broad smooth strokes to create an even area of colour



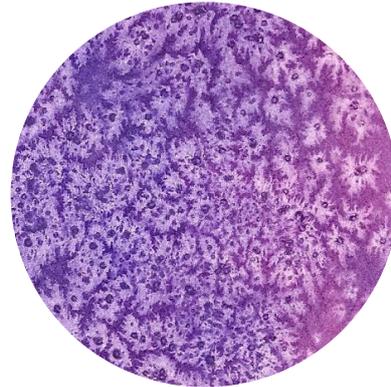
## Wet-in-wet

Paint the paper with clean water first, then touch your paintbrush to the water and watch the colour spread



## Blot

Lift colour off the paper by wetting with a paintbrush and using a tissue to absorb the pigment



## Salt

Create a textured effect by sprinkling salt onto the painting and leaving to dry



## Wax resist

Use wax or a white wax crayon to draw before going over with a wash of colour



## Straw

Drop pools of colour on your paper and blow on them to create lines or mix areas together

How else could you experiment with watercolours?

# Olafur Eliasson word search



BLOT  
CURRENT  
DENMARK  
ELIASSON  
ENVIRONMENT  
GLACIER  
GREENLAND  
INSTALLATION  
OLAFUR  
WASH  
WATERCOLOUR  
WETINWET

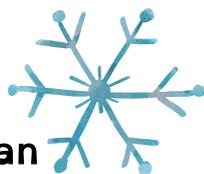
## Glacial facts

Glaciers contain an estimated 69 percent of the world's fresh water supply.

If every glacier and ice sheet on earth suddenly melted, global sea levels would rise by over 260 feet.

During the peak of the last ice age, glaciers covered about a third of Earth's land.

Unlike red and yellow lightwaves, blue light can penetrate snow and ice. This creates the cool blue colour you sometimes see in glaciers.



## Further research ideas

Find out more about Olafur Eliasson. Which of his other works are most inspiring to you?

Find other artists who create work about environmental change, for example [Andy Goldsworthy](#) or [Agnes Denes](#).

Look into actions and groups local to you which are campaigning about climate change.

Create a climate change slogan based on the graphic design work of [Lisa Congdon](#).